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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 003903

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI AND IO/UNP

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT DEMARCHE DELIVERED: ISOLATING SYRIA AT THE
UNGA; KUWAIT-LEBANON GAS DEAL CONCLUDED

REF: SECSTATE 159137

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Isolating Syria at the UNGA

1. (C) The Ambassador delivered reftel demarche August 30 in a meeting with Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. He urged Kuwait to avoid playing into Syrian attempts to burnish its image at the UNGA, absent progress on key issues of regional stability. Shaykh Dr. Mohammed acknowledged the U.S. request, but did not indicate if he would comply.

Kuwait-Lebanon Gas Deal Concluded

2. (C) Shaykh Dr. Mohammed told the Ambassador that the three-year gas-oil deal between Kuwait and Lebanon, signed by Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora on August 29 in Kuwait, would save Lebanon between 70 million and 100 million USD. The deal was a boon to Lebanon, which could not buy gas-oil at market prices since it was deemed a credit risk, the FM said, adding that Lebanon would no longer be at the mercy of the Lebanon "oil mafia." When asked if Lebanon would receive oil at a concessionary price, the FM said no, but that the gas-oil (mazout) would be priced at international oil company prices, and would come from Kuwaiti plants in Europe. The savings would come from eliminating middle men.

3. (C) The FM reported that PM Siniora told him during the PM's recent trip to Kuwait that the truck companies affected by Syrian border closures with Lebanon were owned primarily by Arabs from countries other than Lebanon, including Saudi Arabia, but that small produce growers in Lebanon were being hurt. Shaykh Dr. Mohammed added that PM Siniora had told him Syria promised to lift the ban, with no time frame specified.

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